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WHAT IS THE PRESENT CONSENSUS OF OPINION AS TO THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS IN PREPARATORY AND COLLEGIATE EDUCATION?

THE qualifications I possess for this service, according to the committee which appointed me, seem to be ignorance of the present condition of affairs as regards entrance requirements in the controlling universities, and gross uncertainty as to what should be done for the future. The first will enable me to narrate without any prejudice matters of fact. The second will permit me to express my doubts in so persuasive a manner as to compel conviction.

The most recent authoritative literature on the subject consists of the reports of the Conferences on Uniform Entrance Requirements, held during the first half of 1896, of six large universities and the associated schools, and the published statements of certain of these universities concerning their special requirements for the future.

The changes enumerated will begin to take effect in June 1898. There seems to be no doubt that their consequences will be important and far reaching.

Hundreds of teachers have read these reports, and scores of schools have already modified their curricula and their methods of teaching to conform to them. There have been renewed efforts to make the school courses yield power rather than knowledge, systematized knowledge rather than isolated knowl-

edge, the development of judgment and habits of good thinking rather than memory. Reënforced as these recommendations will be by examinations given in conformity with their precepts, it is not too much to say that a beneficent revolution will be brought about, affecting first the college preparatory schools and through them, on one side the other secondary and the primary schools of the country, and on the other the colleges not included in the inner circle of the six. It will take a little time to make the necessary adjustments, and it is not too early to begin.

In a general way the changes are in accord with what every one who appreciates the demands of real education must approve. They deal with the intellectual habits of the individual student rather than with the preparation of definite textbook work. They encourage sight reading and conversation in foreign languages, abundance of laboratory work in science with accompanying notebooks, systematized parallel reading in history, and the attainment of power everywhere. When we add to them the reforms already practically triumphant in the teaching of English, they point to a better day than America has ever seen in the matter of secondary education.

When one for the first time examines these innocent looking reports, side by side with the published requirements of the ordinary good college, they do not seem to necessitate any considerable advance of age or preparation. Something is said about *minimum* requirements, and the demands made seem elastic and adaptable, so that it might be supposed that they would leave the subject about where they found it, as to amount required, each college taking what it chose, and that the only effect would be to encourage the right sort of teaching and uniformity up to a certain point. These effects they will undoubtedly produce, and these are their blessed fruition. But these are not all.

It may be that all the universities represented in the syndicate did not expect any other results. Indeed there is reason to believe that some connected with the movement were sur-

prised at certain visible consequences, and were engaged in stoutly maintaining the virtues of a low standard of admission while requiring a high one.

But for some reason the reports were found to contain the germs of consequences other than uniformity and good teaching. When the schools were told that they must teach languages to provide for sight translations of considerable difficulty, mathematics to give power to work out rather intricate problems of algebra and geometry, history so as to read all around the era studied and know its causes and consequences, and so on through all the list, excellent as they recognized these things to be, they found it indispensable to have more time. They were not generally loath to take it. It gave them another year of interesting and profitable work. Already some schools have added or announced an additional year, and among the demands Dr. Sachs expects to make is "a fuller allotment of time" for secondary instruction. This is the result concerning which there may be most argument.

The protests which have been filed for a few years past against the advanced age of graduation from college are many and potential. It is *not* a good thing that in order to secure a college degree, a professional education and a small income, a man must wait till he is thirty. It means unwholesome limitation of the educated professional men to the class of the well-to-do. It means, moreover, the omission of the college course in numerous instances. Nor will free tuition and scholarships solve the question, for there yet remain the problems of maintenance and enforced celibacy. The presidents of at least two of the universities uniting in the conferences have forcibly presented the issue, and the present condition is so unsatisfactory as to find few defenders.

The difficulty is usually supposed to lie in the primary and secondary schools, and in the family and social arrangements of their boys. That these boys do not reach the same stage of advancement at the same age as those of France, Germany, and Switzerland, has been frequently pointed out and is evident by a

comparison of curricula. Thus the normal boy of the French Lycée of sixteen or seventeen is reading in Greek, selections from Homer, Sophocles, Plato, and Demosthenes; in Latin, from Lucretius, Vergil, Cicero, Livy, and Tacitus; has a fairly good knowledge of English or German, gained by eight years' study, and an excellent one of French, knows pretty well his algebra and geometry, plane and solid, and has made considerable study of at least one science. In short he is ready for a good American college. His American brother of the same average advancement is two years older.

The causes of the difference usually given are various. The simpler system of weights and measures saves time for the French boy, as well as the simpler spelling of the language. These advantages can hardly, under present conditions, be realized in our schools. More potent are, probably, three other causes:

1. The French curriculum is the work of the best experts of the nation. There is no duplication. The different parts supplement and support each other. The gradation is perfect, and the boy passes, without break and with a thread of continuity and relationship weaving all the courses together, from the kindergarten to the university.

2. The French teaching is trained teaching by selected teachers. They have all learned something, at least about elementary ideas of teaching. All crudities and great weaknesses are weeded out in their excellent normal schools, which prepare their teachers most efficiently for the work.

3. Education is a more serious and important thing than with us. The school day lasts from 8:00 to 5:30 o'clock, five and one-half days in the week, and about 220 full school days in the year. The length of a college preparatory year about Philadelphia is from 160 to 170 days of four or five hours each. Two French years are equivalent to three American years in time and energy given to intellectual education, and, I presume, in intellectual progress.

It may be said, and I suppose with truth, that the American

boy gains physical, social, and moral advantages denied to his more closely worked French brother. I do not gainsay it; I only ask whether our material is of such tender stuff that it needs 200 holidays out of 365 in a year; whether the shortening of school terms has not gone on out of all proportion to the legitimate demands of the boy; whether, without sacrificing health or reasonable sport or social development or any other proper diversion, we might not make their intellectual pursuits in the minds of our preparatory students (and, indeed, also college students) a more serious part of life to which other interests should be sacrificed.

I have been told that in Russia there are 180 legal holidays in a year and that it requires a Russian workman one day to recover from the dissipations of each legal holiday. Is there anything suggestive in this as to the condition of some educational institutions?

It is true that a school without physical or other outside organizations and ambitions is not usually a desirable school, and, moreover, might not be in this country of the all-powerful boy a popular or profitable school. But I would like to do something to rescue and exalt the really ambitious and promising student from the herd of athletes and musicians in which he is now lost. I would like to make it felt that the real hero is the intellectual rather than the physical leader, and that the much maligned "grind" is, in many cases, the boy with a future. Will not this be in the long run to the great advantage of athletic interests with which I am in great sympathy? Nothing ever prospers permanently by being exalted into a place to which it has no title.

In this connection I think someone needs to say a word about the lack of intellectual ambition which seems so conspicuous in many young men well prepared for college. Instead of an eagerness to occupy a fascinating field just opening before them, a keen appreciation of the nobility of the possession of the culture and knowledge which may be theirs, there is evident, and I judge from no single college, a disposition to consider

that the battle has been won in the passage of the entrance examinations and that now they are to have their reward in the social and athletic activities of college life. A certain amount of this is unavoidable, but, except in the case of those students who come from isolated country schools under great stress of poverty, it is lamentable to see the indifference with which many excellent students regard their intellectual opportunities. Many recover in later years, but time is lost and enthusiasm frittered away before the recovery begins. May it not be that the energies of the teacher are, almost inevitably with our present arrangements, too exclusively employed in technical preparation, which destroys interest and is the foe of exalted ambition; and that the colleges too suddenly throw upon the boys a liberty for which they can have no previous training.

Theoretically the certificate system was to destroy this evil. It was believed, and in many cases rightly, that the preparation for an external examiner, the endless grind over old papers, the years devoted to the object, not of securing an education, but of passing an examination, were fatal to generous enthusiasm and would create a contentment with poor achievements when the goal was reached. Today I believe we are suffering from this evil in a serious form. The certificate system, however, as often employed, has probably proven itself to possess other evils scarcely less serious. It has so often fallen into deserved discredit that some colleges which have adopted it are finding it necessary to change, preferring not to encounter the reputation of opening an easy way into their membership. If, therefore, the examinations conducted by outside bodies are inevitable, would it not be well to place the most stimulating men in contact with the boys during the last school year and first college year.

I certainly have no disposition to cast the whole blame for this state of affairs upon the schools. The colleges have, probably, an equal share to be responsible for, and the social ideas of the patrons a still larger. It is they who demand the long vacation, the extravagant devotion to athletics, the provision for a

"good time" at school and college. The rule of the boy in many families in such cases is absolute and neither parent nor school is able successfully to resist. But if we know what is right from an educational standpoint, we need not keep quiet because the case is difficult. If we see clearly the causes of the intellectual backwardness of the American boy we are untrue to our duty if we do not proclaim it. We may be sure that such protests are not wholly unfruitful.

If, however, the long vacations are inevitable, we ought to have more summer work for those who do not wish to waste so much time.

But this is a digression. We were saying that the remediable causes of the loss of time in secondary schools were ill-considered curricula, untrained teachers, and short terms. The first is yielding to the treatment of the Committee of Ten, the advice of university faculties, and the associated wisdom of the schoolmasters; the second is also mending; the third, so far as my knowledge goes, is as bad as ever. As a net result there is a gradual recovery and many boys go into our highest colleges at a reasonable age. We all know individual cases of average boys being well prepared at sixteen and seventeen, just enough cases to make us believe it is quite possible in many more, and Harvard University, which has not materially altered its standard for some years, finds that the average age of admission has decreased from nineteen years, seven months, to eighteen years, nine months, between 1889 and 1895, and in the latter year eighteen were admitted under seventeen years of age.

But the movement has not gone far, and eighteen and one-half is still the average age of admission to the best colleges of the Eastern states. It does not seem to have deterred entry. The large universities are rapidly growing, and college students the country over have increased between 1872 and 1895 from 23,000 to 82,000, from $\frac{6}{100}$ of 1 per cent. to $\frac{12}{100}$ of 1 per cent. of the total population. This includes, however, a large number of institutions of very low requirements.

Nevertheless, until parents and schools find some effective

way to advance their boys and girls faster than they do, the wisdom of adding to their burdens may be seriously questioned.

The six associated universities are out of reach of criticism. They know their own business. Were it not that their standards will have a serious influence upon all other institutions within their limits, which are practically coterminous with the nation (an influence, however, especially strong in their own locality) it would be manifestly improper for me to say a word.

They are not blind to the tendency. The presiding officer of one of them in his last report, after showing conclusively the evils of the advanced age of entrance, as shown in the handicaps upon poor students and the frequent omission of the college course, concludes: "I can think of no other solution than the reduction of the college course as it now exists by one year." Simultaneous with this report appear from the same university increased demands upon the schools, which they immediately construe as necessitating an additional year of preparation. The full effect of both changes will be to give the freshmen year to the schools and make the cleavage between secondary and higher education a year later, or at nineteen and one-half years.

It is on the wisdom of this proposition thus baldly stated, and the consequences which will flow from it, that the discussion should turn.

This is practically the age of admission to European universities, and if the undergraduate departments of our foremost institutions are, immediately or in the near future, to be the counterparts of Oxford and Berlin, we may all rejoice. We will have ultimately in America all that Europe can furnish, and we are approaching the consummation by rapid strides. But we have been led to consider that in our graduate courses leading to a Ph.D. degree we would find our real university students, and that the colleges, including those with university attachments, are in reality preparatory schools in the case of students whose ambitions demand higher work. If the advancing standard, the proposition to substitute a three years' course for a four, the tendency to make nineteen or twenty the entrance age, are

all moves in the direction of the establishment of a few institutions strictly devoted to university work, it only remains for the colleges patriotically to adjust themselves to the new conditions, and bear the evils of the transition as placidly as possible.

Indeed, this is what we are probably coming to. It is true Harvard announces officially, "In framing the new terms of admission of Harvard College the faculty does not intend to increase the total amount of work required in preparation;" it is true, moreover, that the addition of the year simply places other of the universities side by side with Harvard in the matter of requirements; and that the general expression of dissatisfaction with the advancing age of graduation will probably prevent further movements in this direction for a time at least. But just as the best colleges have found it desirable to do without preparatory departments, so the best universities will find it desirable, when they can afford it, to give their energies exclusively to university work and omit at least the lower classes of their undergraduates who need juvenile care and training. Many schools will, of course, then feed the universities directly, but a place may also be found for the pure college.

Whether the time has now come for the college to appropriate this place by setting up its own standards, making its own relations upwards and downwards, is, it seems to me, an open question which may properly be answered differently by different institutions.

I am not speaking for the weak colleges, small by reason of their weakness, having a shifty policy which must by all means get some students in order to exist, but of those colleges with sufficient resources of funds or friends, and a sufficiently loyal constituency to be able to determine to some extent their own future. My idea of such a college is one which takes boys from good schools, by rigid examination or certificates, at sixteen or seventeen and maintains a standard not greatly different in amount of requirements from the present standards of the good small colleges of the Eastern states.

I suppose such colleges would be, in one sense, anomalous

institutions; that there is nothing similar in other countries. They do work, which, at least in its lower years, is elsewhere accounted a segment of secondary education; hence it has been frequently proclaimed that there is no place for them, but that the school and the university will in time squeeze them out of existence. Nevertheless, we have them here; many of them are sure to live; they have arisen in response to a real demand; they have performed a useful function and deserve well of the republic. They often satisfy a local or denominational need not otherwise supplied, and it may be that a wise policy will increase their hold upon the public confidence and that the present is their opportunity.

It does not seem unreasonable to me to think that the division of secondary education and the relegation of the latter part of it to a wisely directed college would be the very best thing. The English, French, and German secondary schools hold their boys, roughly speaking, from twelve to twenty. There are many complaints that the discipline necessary for the small boys is irksome, and unprofitable for the older; that the yearly repetition of the regulations and methods of teaching up to manhood becomes enfeebling to the will power, destructive to honest enthusiasm and produces an unhealthy rebound during the first university year. If the latter half of the time were spent in a college with the minimum of regulations necessary to secure good morals and sound *morale*, leading to a Bachelor's degree, with a normal social life, it would be much better; and the question I desire to ask is whether something of this sort is not the best outlook for the small unattached college. Such a college would probably be supported by the following classes of patrons:

1. Many fitting for business, who consider twenty-one the very last year when a young man can be induced to attend to the traditional "sweeping the store" with grace to himself and satisfaction to his employer.

2. Many who expect to take professional courses and who wish the intellectual outlook obtained by college life before narrowing themselves to their specialties.

3. Many of more mature years whose early advantages have been slight, who have mainly been prepared in public schools and by personal effort and who have been awakened, perhaps rather late in life, by a book, a lecture, or a conversation to an intense desire to be educated.

4. Many who, for various reasons, social, moral, religious, or intellectual, prefer to begin their collegiate career in such an institution, following it out in the undergraduate or graduate courses of the university.

It seems that there might be sustenance for a number of small but strong colleges of a lower grade than the universities propose to maintain, which would have their feeders among the secondary schools and, in their turn, supply the ranks of business men and of professional and graduate schools.

But an objection and, in my opinion, a very serious one, will immediately occur to many of you. How can a different standard be maintained for the two collegiate grades?

If the college has a definite constituency of its own with its own preparatory schools, or if a group of such colleges is fed from the same preparatory schools, which send only occasional boys to the larger universities, they can set their own standards, and the place I have endeavored to outline can well be filled. But if a small college draws its students from schools whose main purpose is to feed the higher grade of colleges which necessarily determine the standard, the problem becomes very difficult. If it undertakes to secure the boys a year before the completion of their course it is a procedure which the school will be apt to frown upon, and the public sentiment of the boys, not usually very well instructed, will condemn as being the resource of a cheap institution to underbid the better neighbors. It will be in danger of receiving the fag-end of the classes — those who are not able or do not wish to take what is supposed to be a more severe and exalted course. If, on the other hand, it admits to the sophomore class, it will produce something of the same effect in the school and will receive all the inconveniences which result to itself from the omission of the freshman year.

These considerations may make it necessary to conform to the higher standard as a less evil alternative. Every institution would have to determine this to satisfy its peculiar circumstances.

But there may be, on some such basis as I have attempted to outline, an honorable and assured future for the college as a separate institution. It is to be hoped that it will accept the basis in a liberal spirit. It must not set itself athwart the spirit of the age and assume to itself the unnecessary responsibility of defending ancient ideas and practices. It must rather, without sacrificing the difficulty and dignity of real education, be very alert to, and very closely in touch with, the demands of its constituency. It does not seem to me for instance, that it is necessary for it to be the special conservator of the Greek language and what is called the integrity of the Bachelor of Arts degree. With Harvard and Johns Hopkins, and Cornell, and Williams and Bryn Mawr giving the degree without Greek the revolution is accomplished. If it be treason they have made the most of it and succeeded. While the amount and quality of Greek in a college may be the best measure of its scholarship there are certainly some students who need a liberal culture and are capable of securing it without Greek who should be, when they succeed, crowned with the degree which now and in past ages stands and has stood for liberal culture.

Such colleges—honest in every published statement, manned by sympathetic and scholarly officials whose main interests lie in the welfare of the students as individuals, equipped with all supplies of books and apparatus their needs demand, drawing their students to themselves by ample provision for and interest in every justifiable athletic and social function, stimulating intellectual ambitions which will find their natural outlet in the large universities, fitting them by effective training for successful careers in these universities—such colleges have certainly a place of no small importance in our American system.

ISAAC SHARPLESS

HAVERFORD COLLEGE